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AN

# ASSIZE SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

MINSTER AT YORK

ON SUNDAY, 16th MARCH, 1794.

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BY THOMAS COLLINS, D.D.

Rector of COMPTON VALENCE, Dorsetshire;—Incumbent Curate of BURNLEY  
Lancashire;—Chaplain in Ordinary to His ROYAL HIGHNESS The PRINCE of  
WALES;—and on this Occasion to The HIGH SHERIFF of the County of YORK.

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Published at the Request of The HIGH SHERIFF and The GRAND JURY.

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Y O R K:

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M. DCC. XCIV.





**A**S the following Copies will best shew the Situation of the Author's Mind on this Publication, he hopes no Apology will be thought necessary for prefixing them.

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To THOMAS LISTER of GIsBURNE PARK Esq.  
HIGH SHERIFF of the COUNTY of YORK.

Sir,

*I Think myself much flattered by your Commands; and if I had not previously received a similar Application from The Gentlemen of The Grand Jury, the Sentiments You was so good as to express to me last Night must have demanded a ready Concession, however diffident I am of my own Ability to prepare any Thing, and especially on such a Subject, worthy public Attention.*

*Admirably*

*Admirably qualified as I know you are to judge of the probable Utility or Frivolity of any Paper of such a Nature as the present, added to the Part you have always taken in supporting independently in Parliament the Equipoise of the Constitution in all its Points, and united with an active and patriotic Exertion in the late War in Defence of your Country against the Phalanx of its Foes; and lately with a renewed Offer of your Services at an alarming Crisis on the Appearances of Things at Home;—partial as you may be to me, yet I could never hesitate about the Motives which have induced you to subjoin the Honour of your Name to a Requisition which impresses my Mind with the highest Degree of Sensibility and Respect.*

*I beg you to believe me, with the greatest Gratitude and Esteem,  
Sir,*

*Your most obliged and devoted*

*Humble Servant,*

**THOMAS COLLINS.**

**YORK, March 19, 1794.**



To Sir GEORGE ARMYTAGE, Baronet.

Grand Jury Room.

Sir,

*I Beg you will accept Yourself and present to the other Gentlemen of The Grand Jury my sincerest Acknowledgments for the Honour You have done me.*

*When the Discourse was composing, I thought no Consideration scarcely would induce me to make it more public than its Recital to so large an Audience.—On more mature Reflection, it would ill become a Preacher of Deference and Respect to oppose his own Inclinations to the united Decision of a Grand Jury, with the greater Part of whose Abilities and highly-respected Characters I have for many Years enjoyed the Happiness of an intimate Acquaintance.*

*The Sermon shall immediately be put to Press.*

*I have the Honour to be,  
with great Submission and Regard,  
Gentlemen,*

*Your most obedient humble Servant,*

YORK, March 18th, 1794.

THOMAS COLLINS.

N. B. The GRAND JURY on this Occasion were

Sir Geo. Armytage Bart. Foreman	§	Walter Fawkes Esq.
Sir John Ramsden Bart.	§	Edward Parker Esq.
Sir Christopher Sykes Bart.	§	Thomas Yorke Esq.
Mark Sykes Esq.	§	Charles John Brandling Esq.
John Lowther Esq.	§	Matthew Wilfon Esq.
Bacon Frank Esq.	§	Stephen Tempest Esq.
William Wrightson Esq.	§	Anthony Lister Esq.
Benjamin Ferrand Esq.	§	Henry Pulleine Esq.
Peter Auriol Hay Drummond Esq.	§	Robert Denison Esq.
James Fox Esq.	§	





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13th Ch. of St. PAUL's Ep. to the ROMANS, Ver. 7.

*“Render therefore unto all their Dues;—Tribute to whom  
“Tribute is due;—Custom to whom Custom;—Fear to  
“whom Fear;—Honour to whom Honour.”*

OF whatever the Human Mind hath been best enabled to ascertain from its Researches into the Ways and Works of Providence, nothing seems more certainly demonstrated than that the Universal System is designed to be a System of Regularity and Subordination.——Every thing we are acquainted with in Nature is actuated by Principles appropriate to its Destination and its End.—All the Parts of inactive Matter, or that are put in Motion;—All the Branches of vegetative and vital Œconomy;—All the Properties and Tendencies in the Terrestrial Sphere, or in the Orbits of Heaven, are alike influenced and directed by those inherent and invariable Laws which their Divine Creator hath imposed on them.

And

AND as every Thing else in Nature is thus conducted to its End by a proper Principle of Action, The Great Author of Nature hath implanted in Man, who holds so considerable a Rank in the Chain of this Universal System, Faculties and Endowments adapted to his Character and Station in it. As a Rational Being, he has Intellect and Reflection for his Guide;—as a Moral One, Conscience, Judgment, and Volition;—and as a *Social and Dependent Creature*, the Impulses of *Benevolence and Union*.

REQUIRING therefore, as He does, every other Part of the Creation to conform to its proper Subserviency and Use; The Immutable Protector of this System, thus wisely and beautifully arranged, cannot but expect that Human Actions should be conformable to the Situation of Man. Consequently, every Member of a Family or of a Community, affording him the Blessings and Protection of its Government conducive to the common Happiness and Welfare, is bound to direct his Conduct by the Rules of Affection and Allegiance in Obedience to the Will of God.

FROM this celestial Fountain  
then is derived the Obligation to Laws and Order.  
And



And whoever casts his Eyes but for a Moment on the Effects of a Derangement in any Part of this sublime Adjustment will readily acknowledge the Beneficence as well as Wisdom of the divine Organization.

SHOULD this habitable Globe or any one of that infinite Variety of Constellations now seasonably running their periodical Courses relax their Evolutions or interfere with one another, the whole Frame of Nature must be disjointed and dissolved.—Mutilate or remove the Efficients of a Plant, the Powers of Vegetation will proportionately collapse and be disordered:—Animal Life is extinguished, or its Health impaired, by the Obstruction or Irregularity of its Functions:—Intemperance affects the Bodies, and Passion the Minds of Men:—In Domestic Life and in Civil Government, “where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion and every evil Work.”

So true is that emphatical Encomium of our excellent Countryman, judicious Hooker at the Close of his Survey of Law in all its different Branches and Departments.—“Of Law there can be no less acknowledged than that her Seat is the Bosom of God, her Voice

the Harmony of the World.—All Things in Heaven and Earth do her Homage; the very least as feeling her Care, and the greatest as not exempted from her Power. Both Angels, and Men, and Creatures of what Condition soever, “ though each in different Sort and Manner, yet all with uniform Consent, admiring her as the Mother of their Peace and Joy.”\*

UPON this Basis I apprehend it is that *Christianity* attaches and applies its Sanctions to *Civil Government*.—For, however the Fashion of the Times may wish to sever the Institutes of the Gospel from the Principles of natural and politic Law, they not only perfectly assimilate, but, as an eminent Foreign Civilian well observes, “ are the Principles upon which the whole Structure of Religion and Morality is raised. The Christian Code completely ratifies and confirms the Law of Nature, and converts Moral Philosophy into a religious and popular Doctrine;—a Doctrine founded on Facts, and in which the Authority and Promises of the Deity manifestly intervene in the fittest Manner to make their Impressions on the Minds of Men.” ‡

To

\* Ecclesiastical Polity, Page 103.

‡ Burlamachi, V. 1, Page 312.



To the same Purport we find the Application of our own learned Commentator upon the Subject.—

“ The Precepts of Revelation (says he) are found upon Comparison to be really a Part of the Law of Nature, tending in all their Consequences to Man's Felicity.”—

And in a Page or two afterwards elegantly abstracts the Argument of St. Paul in the Passage of which the Text is the Conclusion, defining “ Municipal Law to be a Rule of civil Conduct, commanding what is *Right* and prohibiting what is *Wrong*.”—

For what says The Christian Legislature?—“ Let every Soul, (*πᾶσα ψυχὴ* emphatically,) Every Soul, in whatever Country, or under whatever Form of Government he resides) be subject to the Higher Powers, for they are not a Terror to *Good* Works, but to the *Evil*.”—

“ They are the Ministers of God for *Good*, but Executors of Wrath upon them who do *Evil*.”—“ Who-soever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinances of God : Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for Wrath but also for Conscience Sake.”

THE Plain Import of the Passage is this.—

“ The End of Government and the Business of the Magistrate is the Protection of *Justice* and the Prohibition

of *Vice*. ——— Whosoever then resisteth or perverts such necessary and salutary Purposes in the Œconomy of Civil Life, resisteth the Ordinances of God.— It is incumbent upon Men therefore to respect the Laws and Regulations of Government, not merely in Apprehension of the Penalties which may justly be inflicted upon the Disobedient by the Civil Magistrate, but as an essential and important Duty resulting from their *Social State*, and of a conscientious Discharge of which an Account is registered in the Bosom of the Judge of all Men.” \*

IN FACT and Truth : Can it be supposed criminal in the Eyes of Heaven to injure an Individual in his Property or his Person ; and shall it not be thought a Crime to disturb the Peace and Happiness of a Kingdom ?— On the one Hand ; ——— As “ the Eyes of the Lord are in *every Place* beholding the Evil and the Good ; ” — shall a Guardian of a Family be judged criminal in His Sight, who, instead of loving and protecting, abuses and oppresses them ? — And if the Supreme or subordinate

\* See the justly celebrated Mr. Lock's Paraphrase on the Place, Quarto, Page 212.—Stanhope on ditto, V. 2, Page 114.



subordinate Governors of a Kingdom should violate or neglect the Duties of their respective Stations, will the Lord not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it?"

—————On the other Hand;—is it a Crime to interrupt the Harmony of domestic Life or of a Neighbourhood, and instead of Love to introduce Malevolence and Contention?—And shall it not be thought a Crime wantonly to excite a Nation to revolt;—to encourage Sedition, Anarchy, and Desolation, or, as hath impiously been vaunted, “to set in Flames the four Corners of Europe?”

INDEED whoever looks into the sacred Records of Christianity must shut his Eyes against the Light if he does not discover that its genuine Spirit is most extensive and universal;—not confined to any particular Situation in human Life, but leaves no Condition out of its Influence and System;—illustrates and enforces equally the Duties of every Rank in the social Chain;—discountenancing alike severely the Abuse of Power and the Disobedience of Law; and reaching to the Heart where no Human Power can reach, by exacting reciprocal Obeisance to the civil Institutes from every  
Department

Department in a State, as the Ordinances of Heaven.

—————The Point of Doctrine then resulting from this brief Deduction of the Subject is this.

—————That it is incumbent upon every Legislative Authority to make *Virtue* the Foundation, and *Social Happiness* the Object, of their Laws;—And that every Member of such a Community is constrained by the united Obligation of Natural and Revealed Religion, to conform to their Injunctions, and to exert his Capacities, in whatever State of Power or Subordination he may be placed, for their Protection and Advancement.

WHETHER it may be to inadequate notions of the divine Origin of Law, or to a contemptuous Disregard to all Principles social moral and religious, it is a melancholy and an alarming Truth, that at the Close now very nearly of the Eighteen Hundredth Anniversary of a Dispensation, whose Characteristic is Peace, Benevolence, and Order; and by which a large Proportion of the known World hath been civilized and enlightened, an impious and shameless Attempt is made to subvert in the Heart of  
Christendom;



Christendom the Fundamentals of Christianity, and in the Meridian of Philosophy, the Contexture of Man.

IN our own Country to aver that the Government both in Church and State is *perfectly spotless*, and the most congenial to the Will of Providence that may be devised, would be as presumptuous as insulting to those seasonable and salutary Improvements which Time and Wisdom have gradually been promoting.

THUS much however it may be thought incumbent upon any Man, before he is induced either to renounce or to revile so distinguished a Constitution to have ascertained;—Whether there is any other in the known World both in its Principles and its Practice more pure from important Grievances;—more tolerant in its Tendency and Temper; and at the same Time so productive of the most valuable Blessings to the Human Kind?———If there is any well-regulated Establishment which gives greater Liberty of Conscience, and affords larger Indulgencies in the Exercise of religious Sentiments and Persuasions?—If there is any Kingdom where the Rights and Interests of Individuals  
are

are more equitably regarded ;—where their Persons and their Families, their Concerns and Occupations are more equally protected ;—where their reasonable Expectations and Anxieties are more discreetly attended to ; or where their Wants are more diffusively and tenderly relieved ? ————— Nay !—should he not enquire further,—if there is any former Period to be adduced in the History of this or any other Nation, wherein a more liberal Disposition to Conciliation and Indulgence was ever shewn ;—less Restraint laid upon the real Comforts and Enjoyments of Life ;—or greater Means of Prosperity and Happiness so universally extended ? ——— And lastly, ————— when was there a Time and under what Government, when Men's Opinions and Intimations, if honestly and decorously suggested, were more maturely investigated, or their Ideas for Individual Privileges, consistent with the Public Welfare, more candidly examined and embraced ?

GRATITUDE to God ;—the general Body of our Fellow-Citizens (it may be hoped) are sensibly affected with the Blessings they enjoy ; and surely it well becomes others, who imagine they see a little Disproportion on one Side of the Frame of Government to consider



sider circumspectly, (at such a Time as this at least) the Mischief they may be doing, may perhaps inadvertently be doing to some more important Part, if not to the Integral of the Fabric :—And whether the Distortion may not arise from their own inadequate Judgment or overheated Imagination ? ————— Surely indeed, it becomes every Man and upon every Occasion to esteem his own Abilities with Diffidence and Caution ;—and Men of a warmer and more volatile Turn of Mind should take especial Care lest, by an hasty or injudicious Application, “ greater Inconveniences may be introduced than the Disorder they wish to have removed.” ————— For well may be applied to the British Constitution, what the venerable Lord Hale so forcibly impresses in his invaluable Treatise on the Alteration and Amendment of Laws, lately brought to Light.—“ Our Estimate must be made not upon any single Inconvenience that may be remedied, but upon the whole Account of Profit and Loss.—The Wisdom and Prudence of a long Tract of Time and Experience, hath made a Kind of Aggregation and Contiguity in the Fabric.—One Piece is as subservient unto and mortified in another, as the Frame of a Ship or House is :”—And ; “ all Seasons

are no more fit for Alterations to be attempted, than all Men's Tempers, and Dispositions, and Capacities are accommodate to the Undertaking\*."

ESTIMATING, as we trust we may then, that the Elements of our Civil System have been established and matured with the utmost Care and Affiduity, and with a temperate Zeal for supporting the subordinate Rights of Individuals, as well as for its Corporate Power;—and experiencing the real Comfort and Prosperity which we have practically for above a Century enjoyed and are now actually enjoying under a mild and equitable Distribution, can it reasonably be expected,—can any sober and dispassionate Non-Conformist himself reasonably expect that we shall incautiously

\* Page 262 and infra.—Indeed the whole Treatise is so completely and masterly arranged, so far as it goes, (for it is only a Fragment) that it cannot be too strongly recommended for Perusal at the present Moment.—I have no Difficulty in avowing that no Elucidation of any Subject ever made so forcible an Impression on my own Mind: and it is with infinite Pleasure I have this Opportunity of returning my cordial Thanks to one of the profoundest Lawyers of the Age, Mr. Francis Hargraves, for his Present of a Volume which has afforded me so much valuable Information, and who in his learned Preface observes, truly, that Lord Hale in this Treatise has quite exhausted the Subject.



cautiously throw open our Gates, and hazard the Works of such Men as “those great and good Men the Lords *Clarendon* and *Southampton*, with *Sir Matthew Hale*, at the Restoration;—*Lord Somers* and *Lord Cowper*, with their illustrious Associates at the Revolution?———The former, who in the Sunshine of Power and enjoying the full Confidence of the Crown at a Crisis when the Nation yet feeling the Miseries of Anarchy and Fanaticism was through excess of Joy ready to throw all its ancient Rights and Privileges into the Lap of Royalty;—so far from taking Advantage of the Heat and Fervor of the Times to manage Parliaments into scandalous Jobs and fatal Compliances with the Crown, to their immortal Honour, says a Noble Writer\*, with Gratitude to their Memories be it spoken, restored the Monarchy on the Affections of the People, and brought back the Nation to its Primitive Temper and Integrity;—to its old Good Humour, and to its old Good Nature.”———And the latter still more valuable Characters I have alluded to,—who when Despotism was just disarmed and the Kingdom endangered with Contention and Confusion, founded again the Government on the firm, may it be the immutable Basis of *Liberty, Equity, and Order*.

And

\* Lord Bolingbroke.

AND with regard to the Tenets and Establishment of the CHURCH of ENGLAND;—(of which, as well as of our Civil Arrangements such grievous Complaints have lately, and, as we conceive, so unwarrantably been made) can it less unreasonably be expected;—or indeed can any candid and considerate Dissenter himself reasonably expect that we shall hastily give up a System founded we trust on the plain Institutes of the Gospel, and hazard the Labours of such Men as *Cranmer*, *Latimer*, and *Ridley*, *Jewel*, *Hooker*, and *Chillingworth*, at the Head of a Thousand others that would dignify the Catalogue, and suffer them to be destroyed and torn in Pieces without even a Model of a better by intemperate Zealots, disjointed and jarring Latitudinarians,—and among the rest, perhaps, the Enemies of all Religion and Morality among Men?—————For it cannot be suppressed, and perhaps scarcely can be too deeply engraven on the Minds of Britons, that in a neighbouring Nation, from what in its Origin may possibly have commenced from a commendable Anxiety to reform Abuses, we ourselves are Witnesses at the present Hour of a Scene disgraceful to the Human Kind:—a desperate Faction setting at Defiance the Wisdom and Experience of all former Ages; the





the Testimony of all Authorities on which the rest of Mankind have hitherto relied, and exciting their Fellow-Citizens to the Perpetration of Deeds that are an Outrage to every Idea that can be entertained of Piety, of Virtue, of Sensibility;—equally inimical to every Species of Government divine, political, social, personal, and humane, under the horrible Delusion, that no Accounts will be required hereafter, for that “Death is eternal Sleep.”———Presumptuous Men we may surely deem them! Contumeliously thus braving the general Opinion of the World, the Belief and Expectation of the best and wisest Men that have ever lived in it for now very nearly Six Thousand Years, and abjuring together the Understanding of their Fellow-Creatures, the Dispensations of Providence, and the Fear of God!\*

BUT before the most profligate Sinner abandons his Mind to any such unauthorized Dictation, let him pause a little upon a Matter of such infinite Concern, and ask his own Understanding, How can they be sure that Men shall sleep for ever?—How do they know,  
but

\* Burlamachi, V. 1, Page 296,—and see a clear Elucidation of this Remark in the late excellent Dr. Tottie's Sermons, Page 183.

but that there may be “ a Morning of their Resurrection, as well as there has been a Morning of their Creation ? ” — Is it the Power of God or the Wisdom of God that they deny ? May not the same Cause of Human Life and Human Reason, which animates and unites them here re-animate and re-unite them hereafter ? — May not the same Power which above all the rest of the Creation, has endowed Man with intelligent as well as animal Faculties, restore and spiritualize those Faculties at his Will ? — Endowed as Man is, is it easier to create a Man on Earth, or an Angel in Heaven ; — and if it suits the Purposes of the same Author of Man as well, why should it be thought a Thing more incredible that He shall raise the Dead, than that He protects the Living, or will give Reason to the Children that are yet unborn ? — And why may it not appertain to the Dispensations of the same Omnipotent and Omniscient Cause of all Things, that the same Man both in Body and Soul shall glorify Him in Heaven as hath done his Will on Earth ?

ADDED to the rest besides, — How have they attempted to disprove ; — or upon what Grounds is it denied, that the Event has happened ? — — — — — “ That  
Christ



Christ is risen from the Dead and in Consequence become the First-Fruits of them who sleep."—An Event established upon such extraordinary, and to the present Hour, gradually increasing Evidence, as no other Matter of Fact, it is apprehended, ever received; and which, notwithstanding the Means exerted to counteract it, has been nearly for Eighteen Centuries continually gaining Ground, and, we trust, is still continuing to spread its Influence in the World.

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You have been already detained so long by this Discourse, that I shall trespass upon your Patience for a very short Inference or two only, which have not fallen within the Limits of the Discussion we have been attempting.

AND Ift.

Hath the Omniscient Architect of the Universe framed all the Works of His Hands upon a Principle of Subserviency and Order—and shall We then alone endeavour to counteract and suspend, as far as in us lies, the Designs of thy gracious Providence, O God?

God?—————Shameless Ingratitude!—Rather let us prepare ourselves, by an habitual Attention to the Duties of our Stations here, for those unclouded Scenes of Harmony and Joy, where Anger Disunion and Discontent can never enter, nor Violence nor Animosities approach;—calling to Mind the generous Confession of the learned and pious Author of the Ecclesiastical Polity, the excellent Mr. Hooker who, when his Soul was about to take her Flight to the everlasting Regions of Bliss and Love, on being asked by his Confidential Friend (Dr. Saravia) in his last Moments, what might be the Subject of his Contemplation, replied;—“ that he was meditating on the Number and Nature of Angels; and their blessed Obedience and Order; without which Peace could not be in Heaven; and O that it might be so on Earth!”

AGAIN.

Are Hatred Variance Emulations Wrath  
Strife Seditions Heresies Envyings Murders Revel-  
lings and such-like, Crimes against which it is denounced  
the Doors of Heaven will be for ever shut?—————  
Then—let every Man take Care that he falls not into that  
melancholy Choir of Supplicants, “ Lord, Lord, open  
unto



unto us," and should receive that dreadful and irrevocable Answer, " Verily verily I say unto you I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity."

#### LASTLY.

Hath it long since been announced, that " God hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness, and administer just Judgment unto all People?"—Then—" Watch we and pray, for we know not when the Time is."—And altho' of that Day and Hour precisely knoweth no Man," yet let us all remember, but especially let those who set other Men's Judgment at Defiance remember and be persuaded; that as to ourselves the Day approaches, and that the Hour is fast approaching, when an Account of the Talents we are entrusted with must be made up for ever;—when Presumption must be withdrawn;—when Self-Arrogance and Self-Conceit must be humbled at the Bar of God; and when the most arbitrary Despotism and the most daring Licentiousness must alike cry out for Mercy:—that Period of awful Expectation, when the last Herald of God shall finally pronounce in Language then no longer Prophetic, " Lift up your Heads O ye Gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting Doors,

that

that the King of Glory and the Sons of Glory may come in."

"AND Thou, O God! who knowest that we are set in the Midst of so many and great Dangers that we cannot always stand upright; deign, we beseech Thee, to send down thine Holy Spirit from above, and incline our Hearts in the Ways of thy Laws, and in the Works of thy Commandments, that through Thy most mighty Protection, both here and ever we may be preserved in Body and Soul, to thy eternal Glory by the Atonement and Mediation of Thy Beloved Son Jesus Christ Our blessed Saviour and Redeemer."—AMEN.





